

County okays retort pending all permits

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A conditional use permit was approved pending the filing of all paperwork for Oil Tech Inc., a small oil shale retort company that has had a facility for the past two years in Cowboy Canyon, 5.3 miles east of Bonanza.

The retort is located on an acre of state property administered by the State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). Official from SITLA found the company in trespass and assessed a penalty of \$30,000 and a surface lease for \$10,000 a year.

Monday Dale Peterson, Uintah County Building and Zoning, said the company had paid its fine and the Uintah County Planning Commission had recommended approval of the conditional use permit if all necessary permits had been obtained. Peterson said the company was in a "Catch-22" because it could not obtain the permit from SITLA unless the county gave its approval of the project.

Commissioner Lloyd Swain asked to be removed from the discussion and voting on the project because he has a 10 percent interest in the project.

A complaint was filed because the company is operating without a business permit and without a conditional use permit. The retort is located in a mining and grazing zone which allows a retort as a conditional use if approved by the county commission.

Jack Savage, president of Oil Tech Inc., said that he had met with state officials who said they had no problem with the pilot plant. The project is preparing for a 30-day run to be able to monitor air and water emissions.

The project includes about 1,000 tons of shale, drier, crusher, retort, crushed shale bin, storage tank and chain link fence.

Peterson said that several complaints about the project were heard at the County Planning Commission last month. Their complaints involved taking a one-acre postage stamp-sized property out of the middle of State Trust Lands and have it owned by a company where

the process might not work. Others objected that the company was on public land without any permits and questioned the impacts to the area and the roads into the site.

The Planning Commissioner recommended approval of the site only after written verification of all permits had been obtained.

"That's a little difficult because state lands doesn't approve their permit until after the county approves theirs," Peterson said. The Planning Commission recommends that the county approve a lease and not the ownership of the project and that it be for the experimental retort and not a mining operation.

The project produces about a barrel of oil an hour. It doesn't have a fire, all heat is generated by electricity.

Commissioner Dave Haslem said that the commission had run into the same problem on another project and the way to get the project moving would be to approve the project pending all permitting.

John Kay question the commissioner how they could issue a conditional use permit when all the permitting is not in place.

"We will proceed with this if they get the permits from the state," said Haslem. "All we are trying to do is move this thing along."

"I sit here listening to this and wonder what is going on?" said Roger Hacking. "We spend lots of money on economic development and here is a process which could do more economically for the valley than anything else and we are arguing about semantics. I cannot believe what I am hearing."

"If this were developed it would bring more money than we could dream of," Hacking said.

"All that we want them to do is follow federal regulations," said Lanny Kay.

"But they are not on federal ground," Commissioner Cloyd Harrison said.

"At this point it is not a matter of what is right or wrong, they have paid their fine and are waiting for something from the county."

Commissioners approved the conditional use permit, pending the company receiving all necessary permits.

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